



CONFERENCE: Nov. 15-18, 2021
TRADE SHOW: Nov. 16-19, 2021

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The Young Executive

Lessons Learned So You Don't Have To

Jessi O'Daniel, Kentucky Kingdom
Mark Stepanian, CAVU Designwerks



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Mark Stepanian

President, CAVU Designwerks
Young Professional Subcommittee, IAAPA

Mark Stepanian brings years of experience in innovative engineering of large-scale theme park attractions including roller coasters, motion simulators, and interactive VR rides. Mark has strong insight into the future of the amusement industry and has developed patented technologies that further intertwine the story with ride systems to create immersive and innovative experiences. A structural engineer by training, Mark is heavily involved in the ASTM F24 standards committee and has detailed knowledge of the requirements needed to make the safest attractions possible. He also sits on the IAAPA Young Professionals subcommittee where he is working to further their mentor/mentee program.



Jessi O'Daniel

**Vice President of Guest Experience, Kentucky Kingdom
Chair, IAAPA Young Professionals Subcommittee**

Jessi is an IAAPA Certified Attractions Professional (ICAP) who is as passionate about the industry as she is about the park she works at, Kentucky Kingdom. Jessi began her career in the attractions industry at Kentucky Kingdom on the front lines when she was 19. Fast forward nearly 7 years later and she is now the youngest Vice President at Kentucky Kingdom. As the VP of Guest Experience, Jessi oversees more than 1,000 seasonal team members and 13 full-time employees. Her departments covers all components of the frontline operation including Admissions, Revenue, Attractions, and Security as well as many behind the scenes operations including Custodial, Warehouse and Horticulture. Jessi is the guest advocate and oversees all guest related communications. As if juggling these responsibilities is not enough, Jessi also volunteers her time for IAAPA as the chair of the Young Professionals Subcommittee and serving on the North American Regional Advisory Committee.



Today's Lessons

1. The Transition
2. Perception is Reality
3. Embrace Your Youth
4. Servant Leadership: Pros and Cons
5. Balancing Professional and Personal
6. Self Care



Take it from us...

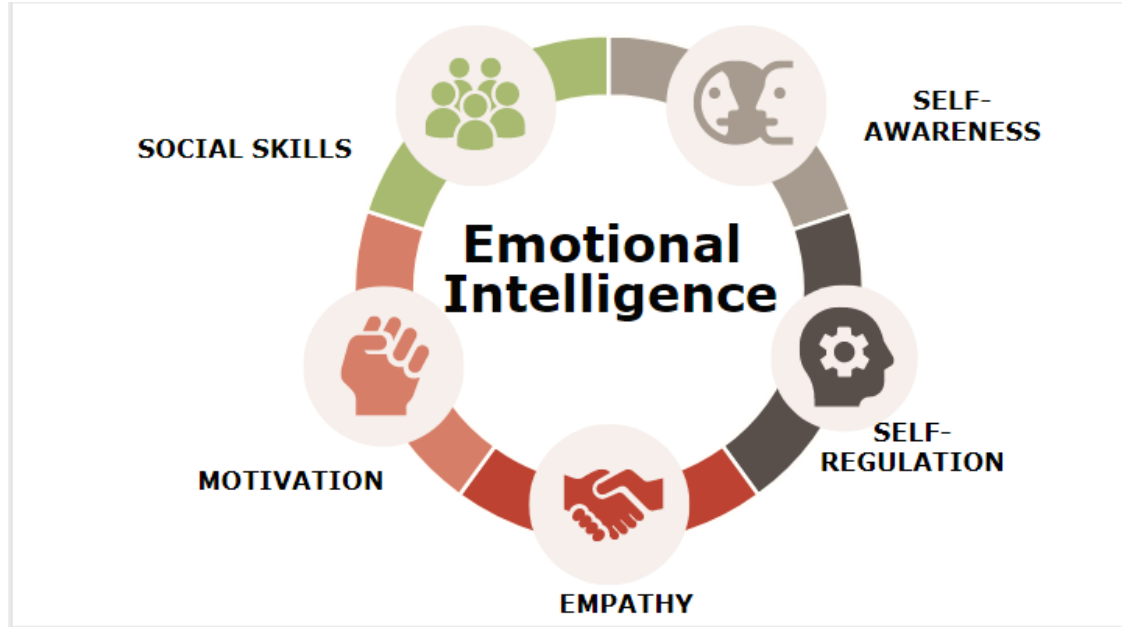
...we learned the hard way!



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Emotional Intelligence



The Transition





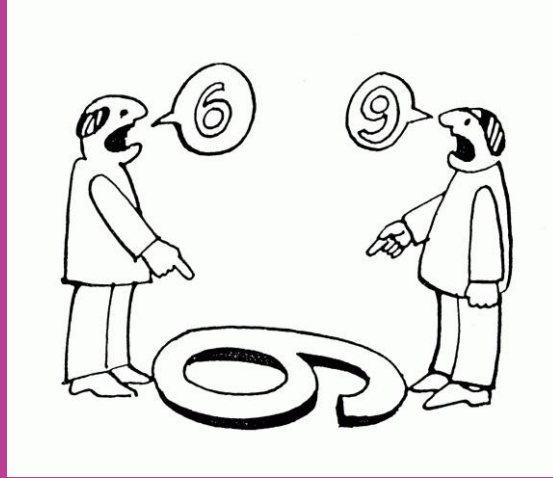
Balancing Professional and Personal



Managing Personal and Professional Relationships

- Talk about it
- Be consistent
- Find another outlet
- Not everyone needs to like you
- Avoid *that* line

Perception is Reality



Common Perceptions

- Young = Inexperienced
- Too Emotional
- Doesn't respect the 'old people'
- “Calls people out”
- Tattletale

Managing Perceptions

- Actions > Words
- Communication is key
- Be patient (we know it's tough!)
- Conflict = Opportunity

Embrace Your Youth



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Inexperienced

Undisciplined

Young

Long Term Oriented

Open to new ideas

Motivated

Adaptable

Energetic

Enthusiastic

Optimistic

**“If someone tells you that you are
‘too much’ tell them to go find less.”**



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Self Care



Self Care is Professional!

- Executive Coaching
- Don't be a hero
- Let it go!



